

RELIGION AND ITS IDEOLOGY: CHALLENGES TO SECURITY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

UGWU COLLINS IKENNA

Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Enugu State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

No doubt, religion has become an aspect of human life that cannot be denied. It has played a vital role in self development and of course national development. So many institutions today world have been established through religious obligations. We find some in the educational sector, health sector and even social sector. However, in recent times as it has been in practice centuries before, we have noticed a range of destructive tendencies emanating from religious activities. To some people, religion as it were should be blamed for such nefarious activities emerging from religious activities. To some people, religion and religious practices should be banned. In this paper, we found out that religion in its natural and pure state has nothing to do with violence. Instead religion is akin to human development and subsequently to national development. This paper blamed the negative tendencies around religion on ideologies. It is revealed by this paper that when such ideologies are brought under control, that religion will definitely continue in its development strides and quality security mechanism.

KEYWORDS: Religion, Religion Ideologies

INTRODUCTION

Man is highly entrenched into a deep web of culture. This cultural disposition of man is exemplified in a number of ways. Prominent among them is religion. Religion has remained a universal permanent and pervasive phenomenon in human society as well as the earliest among the factors that influence human life. According to Imaekhai, “man’s attempt to extricate himself from religious belief in one form or another has also proved elusive” (2010:47). Not minding the prominent space allotted to religion in the affairs of humanity, it is one of the most problematic concepts to understand and define. Consequent upon this, we have got a plethora of definition of religion. More so arising from its controversial nature, we also have diversity in ideology.

What is Religion? To an ordinary person walking along the street, this question does not make any sense on the ground that its answer is very simple. But religion like some other concepts in Social Sciences and Arts is very problematic to define. According to Okwueze (2003:2), “one of the most difficult concepts in terms of definition is the word religion. This is essentially because no one definition by any scholar has successfully and adequately taken care of the various aspects of this ‘enigma’ called religion”. Attesting to this view by Okwueze is Metuh (1987:1) who reveals that:

Religion is a very elusive term to define. This is partly because the object of religion for most part is invisible and spiritual being who are not subject to observation and are conceived in different ways by different people. Besides, the study of religion interests people with widely differing interest as theologians, anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists each of whom sees religion from a different angle.

However, for the sake of this paper, we are duty bound to give a few various views expressed about the meaning of religion. Etymologically, religion is derived from three Latin words (verbs), **ligare** to bind; **relegere** a term essentially connoting a relationship and **religere**, connoting a link between two beings—the human and the divine. Thus, according to Onimhawo, Izibili et al (2006:2): religion involves a relationship between a human being and a divine being. On the one hand, it is a relationship of independence of the human being on the divine or supernatural being. On the other hand, it is the human being of worship (who) plays active role in the relationship”.

Thus, religion has the function of binding human beings to one another, horizontally, and human beings to the divine being vertically.

Durkheim (1915:37) defines religion as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things that is to say, to things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community all those who adhere to them.” According to Okwueze (2003:3), “the twin elements of beliefs and practices appear to be very central”. This is so because as Radcliff (1952:154) opines “any religion normally involves certain ideas or beliefs on the one hand and on the certain observances”. These observances may be positive or negative. Merriam (1980:250) views religion as:

The outward act or form by which men indicate their recognition of the existence of God or gods having power over their destiny, to whom obedience, service, honour are due: the feeling or expression of human love, fear or awe of some super human and over ruling power, whether by profession or belief, by observance or rites and ceremonies or by conduct of life.

Therefore, for this paper we shall see religion as any system relating man to ultimate values, epitomized in God or the Supreme Being and embodying a creed, code and a mode of worship and communion (Adegbesan; 1987:96). Religion is personal and its experience is personal too. No matter how one shares one’s religious experience with one another, the difference is always very clear hence the differences today in religious experience. This has given rise to the proliferation of Churches for Christianity and various sects in Islam. Religion is inert as it were but can only be expressed in certain unequivocal ideologies. These ideologies are propagated by individuals who operate as a group. It is the activities of the group carrying the ideologies that bring about the much talked about impact.

Our major preoccupation in this paper is not to run a definition of religion. But to study religion and its ideologies in respect to national development. Therefore, at this point, we shall discuss a little about the concept of development. The term development according to Ugwueye (2004:99) is problematic. Development is the act, process or result of developing. It is a fact or circumstance bringing about a new situation either through growth, evolution and or expansion (Hicks; 1979:447).

The term development has been variously conceptualized from economic, political, social and national perspectives. All societies do experience development though it has always been uneven and different from one place to the other. The reason for the diversity lies on a number of factors but according to Rodney, “it lies in the ecology within which the people developed and the super structure of the society” (1974:8-9) For Rodney, development is an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships. Similarly, it means the ability to guard the independence of the social group and indeed to infringe upon the freedom of others (Rodney; 1974:3).

Development perceived from economic perspective means growth on per capita basis, the Gross National Product

(GNP) and the simultaneous reduction in infant mortality rate, increased life expectancy, complex network of roads, gigantic buildings, etc. In short, there is an increase of the “goodlife” generally. Tiongco alliging with economic sense of development avvered that:

In many treatises on development, efforts have been made more on dicussing it in purely economic terms and measuring it at the national level. Levels of national income, generation of savings, growth rates of industrial output, availability of public utilities, or rates of illiteracy, infant mortality and life expectancu become indiactors by which a country's stage of development is assessed (1996:20).

Another key concept in this paper is the impact of religious ideologies on national security. What is security? Traditionally, security is all about providing a framework that guarantees the safety of lives and property. Security is the degree of protection against danger, damage, loss, and crime. Security as a form of protection is structures and processes that provide or improve security as a condition (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Security>).

The Institute for Security and Open Methodologies (ISECOM) defines security as "a form of protection where a separation is created between the assets and the threat". (<http://www.isecom.org/hsm>). This includes but is not limited to the elimination of either the asset or the threat. Security has to be compared to related concepts: safety, continuity, reliability. The key difference between security and reliability is that security must take into account the actions of people attempting to cause destruction (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Security>).

Having considered the three concepts that form the basis of this paper which are religion, development and security, we want to look at the place of religion in the national development and security. This has been an important study but has become more pertinent now considering the instability of the national development and security framework.

The paper is structured to begin with an introduction, impacts of religion in the national development and security. The paper made certain findings which shall be found under the recommendation and of course a conclusion. The paper based on library and internet resources to find its materials. Of all the religions in Nigeria, this paper wishes to concentrate its analysis on the two major alien or foreign religions namely Christianity and Islam.

RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGIES AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Religion is a concept that has wide and apparent influence on the people of any given state. It is a way of life that is largely uncompromised and hardly resisted. In this section, we shall take a study on the impacts of religion on the development of humanity hence national development. No doubt, religion is like fire when handled well provides services and when abused is capable of burning down the house.

POSITIVE IMPACTS OF RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGIES IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Generally speaking, religion plays a very vital role in the development of human being and the society at large. Virtually, every religion preaches peace and reconciliation in human relationships, hence every religion serves as agent of reconciliation and peace. Given this background, we find that religion has as one of its intents to provide a peaceful atmosphere where national development and cohesion in human relationships would be the order of the day.

There is a general misconception that religion and development do not mix; that religion has a negative repercussion on development (Weber; 1950). This cannot be unconnected with the series of conflicts that devastate the

nation arising from religious intolerance and crises. Throughout history, religion has been a source of development.

This paper argues that though we have some alarming elements of deviant religious ideologies that can constitute into anti-national development and security threats, religion and development can, and do go together. It submits that Nigeria's development had had the assistance of religion and still does; that without the close collaboration of religion and development in the past, Nigeria would have charted and therefore taken a different course, and maybe has a slower rate of development. The point here therefore is that religion through religious groups plays a vital role in the national development of Nigeria.

In Nigeria society and like in other nations of the world, politics and education are related and in that relationship, like in Nigeria situation, it involves people with active religious inclination. Adegbesan (1988:801) opines that politics and education relate to each other in a circular fashion and hence religious groups are active participants.

During the colonial era, when Christian schools were established they were for the converts only. However, the importance of such educational facility forced the situation and there were made open to everyone within their reach and regardless of their faith. To meet the needs of catechists, interpreters, teachers, nurses and clerks, Teacher Training Colleges and Secondary Schools were established as far back as 1853. The existence of these higher institutions guaranteed for the missions a steady supply of personnel: teacher and evangelists or catechists as well as clerks for the various European and Government concerns, which sprang up in the southern part of Nigeria. With such concentration on educational services between 1842 and 1950, mission schools outnumbered government schools in southern Nigeria.

The development of note here was that these mission schools provided opportunities for children from diverse places and background came to live, work and develop. It provided also the needed social integration and cohesion, which is the bedrock for development first, as Nigerians and in the other hand as Christians. To that extent, Christian educational institutions became pivotal points where nationalistic tendencies evolved and sustained.

Similarly, Islam has strong influence on its adherents and therefore controls their way of life. Thus, it assumes the role of impacting proper Islamic education and culture to its adherents. *The umma* (Islamic community) particularly if it is *Bilad al - Islam* (Land of Islam), must be based strictly on the *Quran, Hadith and Sharia*. Hence, in such an *umma*, Islamic education is a must. In the *umma*, both rudimentary and advanced Islamic education is given. Millions of both levels of quranic schools are spread all over the areas where Islam has its influence in Nigeria. According to Doi (1984:307) with modernisation, some of these schools have been combining Western education with Islamic ones. It is therefore noteworthy that the education given includes science subjects such as Mathematics, Technology and Astronomy.

These, could be regarded as scientific contribution of Islam to development in Nigeria. For instance, a good knowledge of these subjects assists Muslims to know why and how to share or distribute equitably according to the Islamic tenets. Similarly, the giving of zakat (alms) is better done with the proper knowledge of mathematics.

Imaekhai (2010:28) argues that the contribution of religion to national development did not start today. According to him, for centuries, such religious institutions like Churches were among the first institutions to provide asylum for accused criminals. The actual establishment of prisons and penitentiaries was a religious idea to allow the offender to obtain penance for his or her crimes, make amends and convert while being isolated from others

(Imaekhai; 2010:28).

Several studies have shown the important roles religious institutions and groups had played in the areas of healthcare delivery in Nigeria. For instance, hospitals and other care-giving centers and colonies were built initially by various religious organizations for proselytizing and missionary purposes. Nevertheless, they provided at least a modicum of spiritual and symbolic cohesion for the social order.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGIES IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ordinarily, it is undoubtful to say that there is anything arising from religion that is of negative impact on humanity and the society at large. But when critically viewed, one finds out that there are so many issues emanating from religion which are to say the least very unfortunate and threatening to societal peace, human relationship and of course national development. Agreeing to this is Jonathan Swift in Isiramen (2010:320) who opines that “we have enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another”.

Throughout the colonial period, the administration had consistently maintained a neutral policy in matters of religion. This was mainly because of the fact that peaceful co-existence in a multi-religious society like Nigeria is only possible in a secular state (Onyeidu; 2001:42). Igbo in Onyeidu (2001: iv) opines that “indeed, “religion” which was meant to be an integrative factor has become a divisive force in the society. This is true especially with reference to the “imported religions” of Islam and Christianity, which are often abused and manipulated for selfish economic, political and ethnic gains.

As far as national development and peaceful coexistence, which religion from time immemorial has built and sustained are concerned, religion has consistently remained a core and substantial divisive aspect of the politics of ethnicity in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the religious framework that provided all the discussed religious contributions to national development and peaceful coexistence has apparently declined. The religious life of the country has become more induced by sentimental self-flagellation than by substantive social consciousness.

Against this backdrop, it becomes pertinent to critically review the different religious ideologies that threaten the peace, security and national development. According to Isiramen (2010:329), “the seeds of religious debacle were sown in the country many years ago but they became obvious firmly rooted during the military regime of General Babangida when he enlisted Nigeria into the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) in 1986.” It does not mean that there were no religious crises in Nigeria especially between Islam and Christianity but it became very decisive and horrible after the enlisting in 1986.

Apparently any society that is plagued by religious crises hardly develops. This is because it breeds insecurity in the society. In such society given the insecurity disposition, there can be hardly any meaningful development. There is no gainsaying that Nigeria’s development is held by the jugular because of the insecurity primarily occasioned by religious crises. According to Isiramen (2010:329), the gruesome consequences of the violent struggle between these two religions for supremacy have had adverse impact on development in Nigeria. In an atmosphere of constant religious feud, developmental processes are bound to suffer set backs of various dimensions.

Religious violence has become a potent instrument of underdevelopment in Nigeria. Each crisis often leaves behind memories of anger, sadness, tears, and of course frustration. It further leads to massive measure of suspicions and

unquantifiable acrimony. Any society entrenched in this kind of ugly condition created by religious violence cannot have a meaningful development. No sustainable development can be established and sustained under such unhealthy atmosphere. Violence scars people and investors away both local and foreign. This is because it would amount to economic risk for one to invest in an environment that is bedeviled with violence. At some point, it does not end with destruction of properties but loose of lives.

Apart from scaring the investors, it paralyzes the already established businesses and government activities. In some places, economic and social activities are grounded. Worst still, fund that should have been channeled into building schools and providing other social and health facilities are often used in rebuilding houses and structures that were destroyed during the time of the religious crises. This act of wanton destruction is retrogressive.

Religious crises portray religion as subversive. It puts a veil on the positive value of religion, portraying it to be a system that has nothing positive to offer. Whereas religion is supposed to be a system that projects peace, moral re-armament, and a negation of evil in all facets. Religion ordinarily is meant to unite man with the Divine from whom man can draw his resources to live prosperously. It is also a system that enhances the unity of man in relation to others thereby making man lives amicably with others.

Therefore, as far as development in Nigeria is concerned, religious crises is an ill wind that blows no one good. It displaces people, destroys human beings and properties, and distorts educational, social, psychological and political as well as economic well-being of the people. This also brings breakdown of law and order by so doing makes insecurity the order of the day as it is almost becoming in Nigeria.

NEGATIVE RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGIES

The religious crisis, which is the strongest negative impact of religion in the world and Nigeria in particular, is not without some factors or ideologies. It is with the mindset of mentioning them and also to recommend the way forward that this paper is bringing them up.

Moral Issue

In general, crises over intolerable moral differences tend to be intractable and long-lasting (Pearce and Littlejohn; 1997:69). The substantive issues are often a matter of rigidly held moral beliefs, based in fundamental assumptions that cannot be proven wrong (Barash and Webel; 2002:234). According to Maiese (2003:1),

These fundamental moral, religious, and personal values are not easily changed, and people who adhere to a particular ideology may very well be unwilling to compromise their worldview. In addition, because parties to such conflicts often have great difficulty in describing the substantive issues in shared terms, they will find it difficult to reach some sort of compromise even if they are willing.

Such conflicts tend to result from a clash between differing worldviews. One religion's most fundamental and cherished assumptions about the best way to live may differ radically from the values held by another religion (Pearce and Littlejohn; 1997:49). Different religions may have different standards of rightness and goodness and give fundamentally different answers to serious moral questions (Otomar and Wehr; 2002:41). When two or more religions for instance Christianity and Islam have different ideas about the good life, they often stress the importance of different things,

and may develop radically different or incompatible goals.

In his observation, Maiese (2003:1) reveals that “in some cases, one group may regard the beliefs and actions of another group as so fundamentally evil that they exceed the bounds of tolerance and require active, committed opposition. Because values and morals tend to be quite stable, people are often unwilling to negotiate or compromise with respect to these topics”. Indeed, if the basic substantive issues of the conflict are deeply embedded in the participants' moral orders, these issues are likely to be non-negotiable (Pearce and Littlejohn; 1997:50). Parties to such conflicts tend to have great difficulty in imagining a win-win resolution.

This is very much the case in African societies and Nigeria in particular considering their disposition to religion. Every worldview of the Africans is built upon religion. This religious disposition of the Africans was over four decades ago captured by Mbiti who averred that “Africans are notoriously religious” (1969:1). There is still on going the adverse misunderstanding between the missionary religions-Christianity and Islam. This has continued to create a perennial problem of moral divergence. Unlike in other places where morality is based on the frame of one's conscience, in Africa it is built on religion. It causes intractable religious conflict in Africa as whole and Nigeria in particular.

Matter of Justice

Justice is a concept which all and sundry lauds and its desire is so strong that no one wishes to compromise it. Declaration of injustice often times leads to intractable conflicts as well. An individual's sense of justice is connected to the norms, rights, and entitlements that are thought to underlie decent human treatment. This made Deutsch (2000:44) to opine that “If there is a perceived discrepancy between what a person obtains, what she wants, and what she believes she is entitled to, she may come to believe she is being deprived of the benefits she deserves”. This can occur when either a procedure or outcome is viewed as unfair. When people believe that they have been treated unfairly, they may try to "get even" or challenge those who have treated them unjustly.

Indeed, a sense of injustice does not lie low. It often motivates anger thereby leading to aggression or retaliation. Among many options to address injustice, individuals may come to view violence as the only way to address it. This is especially likely if no procedures are in place to correct the oppressive social structures or bring about retributive or restorative justice. Again, it is likely when the people concerned are not willing to avail themselves of the lay down procedure. However, according to Coleman (2000:16) the powerful often respond by attempting to quell the disturbance and maintain the status quo”. This can lead to ongoing violent conflict. Conflicts that center on issues of justice tend to be intractable in part because reaching an agreement about what qualifies, as injustice is often exceedingly difficult. Those who benefit from injustice often perpetuate it, often without being fully aware that they are contributing to injustice. Not surprisingly, victims are typically more sensitive to injustice than victimizers.

Not surprisingly, once one group has framed the conflict in terms of justice, it becomes much more difficult to resolve. If one or both groups advance their claim as a matter of justice, moderate positions become less likely. This makes people according to Glendon to “typically be unwilling to compromise on justice issues, or even enter into dialogue with those whose points of view differ from their own” (1993:9). Negotiation and problem solving thus become more difficult, and actual interests are obscured as the conflict becomes framed as win-lose. People who believe that their cause is just are unlikely to back down or to begin the process of forgiveness and reconciliation.

In fact, those who feel they have been the victims of injustice or unfair treatment may grow extremely angry and feel justified in seeking revenge. On the other hand, they may blame members of the other group and denigrate them as morally inferior, paving the way for dehumanization and more violence (Deutsch; 2000:55). This particular religious ideology has become so imminent in the case of Nigerian nation.

Politics

Religious crises and violence has become political apparatus in the hands of some desperate politicians in Nigeria. This arises from the fact that in Nigeria and of course in Africa, religion is almost inseparable with politics. According to Umejesi (2010:319) “anyone conversant with African Politics will be struck by the dense role religion plays in politics in the continent as a macrocosm, and in the various countries of the continent as microcosm”.

It is no longer news that some politicians had in several occasions vowed that if they lose elections that they would make the state ungovernable. This they achieve by employing religion. Religion has become the willing horse that most people today use to achieve their political ambitions.

Some who have been discredited during their political careers usually come back to achieve political relevance by engaging themselves in some fanatical religious activities which are capable of truncating the peace of the society. In support of this view, Isiramen (2010:335) reveals that

Majority of the apostles of Sharia in Nigeria today are people who worked closely with the late General Sani Abacha or were military dictators themselves who were discredited for financial misappropriation. In order to gain political relevance once more, in at least the Islamic section of the country, these discredited persons decided to employ the issue of Sharia as a strategy.

From the on going events in the country especially the 2011 post election crises, one finds that the crises which brought about the destruction of Churches and killing of Christians in their number which was described as religious crises was purely motivated by politics. The failure of the presidential candidate for Congress for Political Change (CPC) in the April 2011 general election brought about the religious violence that claimed innocent lives. This is purely using religion to address political grievances. This made Salga (1985:5) to point out that “religion means peace and harmony... All those who are fighting are not fighting for religion but politics. There is something ...they exploit. It is certainly not religion but politics”. In support of this view, Ugwu (2009:219), states that “In Nigeria, there is religiosity with little spiritual commitment. The religious leaders parade themselves as the oracle of God but the majority of them is only fending for their selfish gains”.

Given these ideologies, one finds that religion is not the problem that the world is facing at this moment including Nigeria. The current security challenge that is threatening the peace and oneness of Nigeria as a nation and the entire world is better described as terrorism. Terrorism is better seen from another light rather than an offshoot of religion. Religion is purely an agent of development and is originally packaged with peace and security.

Suffice it to say that having noted all these that when improper ideologies are employed into religious practices it certainly generates a whole lot of crises that would impede development and pose aggressive threats to the peace and security of any nations. From this standpoint, it becomes imperative to mention that religion, which has been an age-long agent of development and security, is still very potent in ensuring a sustainable system of development in Nigeria.

Irrespective of the fact, that many people negatively utilize religion to ensure a selfish end, religion in its pure state has been and would continue to be a laudable agent of development and security.

Recommendation

All the problems associated to religion are quite unfortunate. These problems should not have arisen in the first place if people would engage themselves in proper teachings of religion. It is going to be very exciting when people begin to engage themselves in proper religious ideologies. To ensure that state of mind, we have to take note of some these points.

- The government officials at all levels should see themselves as people set to protect the people not minding one's religious or ethnical inclination.
- There has to be a reasonable legal framework to provide legislation that would guide religious activities of the people.
- Within the legal framework, there has to be an adequate punishment mechanism to provide commensurate punishment to all those that would break the law governing religious activities.
- The media should censor very well all their broadcast to ensure that inflammatory statements capable of throwing the nation into state comatose are avoided.
- Religious leaders should emphasize peace and tolerance well and above any other divisive ideologies of their religion.

CONCLUSIONS

Religion as we have noted in this paper is one of the aspects of culture that is apparent, resilient and highly influential. It was formulated from time immemorial to be an avenue through which man would commune with the Ultimate and enhances human relations. When man communes with the Ultimate, it is obvious that many developmental thoughts and ideas would come into man hence religion being an agent of development.

Religion being what it is has certainly favoured every nation of the world in ensuring an enduring, strong and formidable development and security mechanism. In Nigeria development has religion as its beacon and to a very large extent, development is being sustained also by religion.

However, selfish and personal interests have dominated religious landscape thereby turning religion into something destructive and corrosive. Today many evil practices are being associated to religion. Not much is being done today by religion in developing the country. The much that was done previously is now being destroyed incessantly by evil and desperate politicians and other religious fanatics who cover themselves as religious men and women.

This ugly development has rather painted religion as an agent of retrogression and insecurity. The problem of underdevelopment and insecurity associated to religion as in the case of Nigeria is rather unfortunate. Religion in its pure and original state is innocent of all these ugly and barbaric attachments but various ideologies stemming from personal and selfish motives coupled with ethnicity have made religion appear as anti-developmental concept and a bane for Nigerian insecurity challenge.

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